



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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LOWELL D. KERN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

April 7, 2021

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner
Department for the Aging
2 Lafayette Street
New York NY, 10007

Corey Johnson
NYC Council Speaker
City Hall Office
New York, NY 10007

Re: Support for Project Find and Encore Community Services

Dear Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez & Speaker Johnson;

On February 18, 2021, at the Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Housing, Health, and Human Services meeting, Executive Directors David Gillcrist from Project Find and Jeremy Kaplan from Encore Community Services briefed the Committee on their services, with particular attention to meals for older adults aged 65 and over, and senior citizens' access to technology. The discussion focused on anticipated gaps of services in 2021.

At its regularly scheduled meeting on March 3, 2021, the Board voted 41 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote to support:

- An increase in funding for delivered and pickup meals
- Assistance with delivering access to and delivering technology
 - Coordinate collaboration with tech companies to support Project Find & Encore's efforts to serve older adults in MCB4.
 - Establish, following the Department of Education's Learning Labs model, locations to provide COVID safe access to technology at senior or other community service centers.

- Coordinate collaboration with internet providers for low-cost bulk service at senior buildings in Manhattan Community District #4.

Background

MCB4, as part of the annual City budget cycle, analyzes and prioritizes proposed budget items. In the FY 2022 budget, the expense item related to older adults is “increasing home-delivered meals capacity” and specifies three providers. Additionally, MCB4 had a community needs assessment to determine the district’s most vulnerable populations and their needs, and to inform its policy and funding recommendations, completed in March of 2020¹. One of the four populations identified as most vulnerable were older adults 65 and over. That base of information, and the presenters at the Committee, helped guide our recommendations.

In Manhattan Community District #4, **Project Find**, a non-profit senior social service provider, has affordable housing and two senior centers the Clinton Center on West 55th Street and the Coffee House on West 42nd Street. At the latter, pre-pandemic, 1,500 meals were served annually, or an average of 150 meals daily. During the height of COVID in spring 2020, Project Find provided over 5,000 hot meals and 1,900 pantry food boxes to seniors, both housed and homeless, out of the Coffee House, and linked about 750 older adults throughout MCB4 to GetFoodNYC. The Clinton Center at Harborview Houses offers additional services and meals. Pre-COVID, about 90 older adults per day attended the center.

Currently, the organization offers programs virtually, conducts weekly calls, and is assisting to vaccinate seniors. However, the major challenge brought up by Project Find is that many of their clients remain isolated. Many clients have difficulty accessing technology for overall health information, telehealth services, and COVID vaccine access.

Encore Community Services, a community-based senior services provider, has a senior center and two affordable housing sites in MCD4. Encore is the vendor selected by the Department for the Aging² to serve home delivered meals in Manhattan Community Boards 4, 5, and 7, serving nearly half a million meals per year. Those community districts have a population of about 60,000 seniors. Encore presented the Image: NYC Interactive Map of Aging, created by the New York Academy of Medicine, which showed that adults 65 and over who live alone account for 13% of the population in MCD4³.

¹ [Manhattan Community Board 4 Community Needs Assessment, updated March 2020](#), see pages 6-7

² [Currently DFTA’s budget is 0.4% of the City’s budget.](#)

³ [Image: NYC Interactive Map of Aging, created by the New York Academy of Medicine](#)

Pre-pandemic, Encore served 900 clients home delivery meals, that number spiked to 1,600 seniors during the height of COVID in Spring 2020. Currently, the program serves around 1,200 seniors, 700 of whom reside in Manhattan Community District 4. In total, Encore currently delivers about 6,000 meals per week. However, the program has a capacity of 16,000 meals per week, with one meal delivered per day, per client. Referrals for home meal delivery to Encore come from the City's case management agencies. Encore currently has a wait list until August 2021, resultant from contract caps in their referral numbers, directly related to budget allocation constraints.

Encore note its clients also have difficulty accessing technology for overall health information, telehealth services, and COVID vaccine access.

With those resource gaps & needs identified, MCB4 proposes the following:

Plan of Action

Project Find

- Increase contract budgets to provide more meals for neighborhood seniors, in order to increase access to nutritious food, especially given the ongoing pandemic,
- Provide technology and technology assistance to seniors, including affordable internet access,
- Identify and provide culturally competent mental health providers.

Encore Community Services

- Increase contract budgets to serve more home delivery meals for neighborhood seniors, in order to increase access to nutritious food, especially given the ongoing pandemic,
- Provide technology and technology assistance to seniors, including affordable internet access.

- Continue Discussion regarding:
 - Creating Technology Labs for seniors at community-based locations.
 - Supporting the use of senior centers, on COVID-safe, limited basis, to be used for access to computers and tablets. Arrange meeting with the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the office of Council Speaker Johnson to coordinate discussion.
 - Coordinating discussion with tech companies located in MCD4 to assist Project Find and Encore with access to technology, MCB4 District Manger will spearhead this effort.

MCB4 is grateful to Project Find and Encore Community Services in providing for our senior residents and look forward to bringing more support to assist them in this time of need.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4



Maria Ortiz
Co-Chair
Housing, Health
Human Services Committee



Joe Restuccia,
Co-Chair
Housing, Health
Human Services Committee

Cc:

Borough President Gale Brewer

Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal

Assemblymember Richard Gottfried

State Senator Brad Hoylman

State Senator Robert Jackson